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How to Organize A County Agent's Office

C. L. Chambers



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Extension Service.....C.W. WARBURTON *Director*
Office of Cooperative Extension Work.....C.B. SMITH *Chief*
Washington, D. C.



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EXPERIMENT STATION FILE

HOW TO ORGANIZE A COUNTY AGENT'S OFFICE

C. L. Chambers,

Senior Agriculturist, Southern States,
Office of Cooperative Extension Work

System Has Stood the Test

This circular reflects late developments in office technique. The suggestions offered have been gleaned from county agents and office-management experts. The system is based on strict adherence to well-known needs consistent with efficiency. It has stood the test of years, and agents who have installed it place on it their stamp of approval.

Businesslike System Needed

Progressive county agents, eager to be efficient, are adopting systematic methods of office management comparable with those used by successful business men. It is just as disconcerting to a quick-thinking county agent as to a business man to be forced to hunt for and probably not find material because of lack of system. His office is the place where this information is collected for quick reference when called for by the busy farmer or business man. The answer to his problem may be in the form of a State or Government bulletin, or it may be a leaflet or a photograph. The satisfaction of creating the impression of possessing business ability as well as rendering effective service is apparent to the thoughtful agent, and he is constantly on the alert for informational material properly centralized. The information file covering all phases of the work is the answer to this problem.

Alphabetic Subject System versus Decimal System

Unless a well-defined system of arrangement is adopted the store of information may become a junk pile of no use except to try the temper of the searcher for information. The advantages of a uniform system are obvious since it will make it easy for one agent to find material when transferred to another county and for a district supervisor to assist in getting an agent established. The decimal system will work and is in use by many agents who probably should not change,

DISTRIBUTION: A copy of this circular has been sent to each extension director, State agricultural college library, and State experiment station library, and to each extension worker in the Southern States.

but the alphabetic subject is better because it is much simpler to install and operate. In either case the vertical-file units must be installed in which the file is arranged. The alphabetic subject arrangement has the following advantages: It does not require the use of a subject key to tell what number has been assigned a certain subject in order to locate the material; it does away with the necessity of looking in two places before finding or filing material; it eliminates waste of time in assigning a number to material before filing. The exact subject word is the key to unlock the alphabetic subject system.

"The mind of man selects any given image in memory by eliminating all other images from the center of thought." When you look for a word in the dictionary you first eliminate 25 large groups of words by turning to those words beginning with the letter your word begins with; "the most natural method of finding a name of a subject is by the alphabet." In a similar way when you think of the material you want in your file, you think of the great main division it would occur under and of the letter it begins with and eliminate all others. You turn to the end of the file at which the letter occurs as you would with the dictionary. If, for example, this main division were animal husbandry you would expect to find it near the beginning of the file. If the material you want relates to beef cattle, you would expect to find the material near the beginning of the animal-husbandry division. If the material relates to barns you would expect to find the material near the beginning of the subheading, "Beef." Based on this theory of elimination, guides with tabs properly worded serve as signals to the eye and hand. The tabs automatically eliminate all other groups step by step. In the following outline for an information file, the simplicity of the system is evident. This classification has been arrived at after a careful study of many county-agent files.

OUTLINE FOR SETTING UP INFORMATION FILE

(Subheadings)

(Main headings)

(Folder headings)

Agricultural Education

County-agent work.

County-agent work.

Club work.

Club work.
Awards, ribbons, etc.
Camps and short courses.
Character building.
Games and songs.
Judging demonstrations.
Team demonstrations.

Fairs and exhibits.

Fairs and exhibits.

Home demonstration work.

Home demonstration work.

(Subheadings)

(Main headings)

(Folder headings)

Agricultural Education (continued)

Illustrative material.

Illustrative material.
Charts.
Maps.
Motion pictures (lists).
Photographs (lists, etc.)
Slides (lists, etc.)

Legislation.

Legislation.

Photographs.

Photographs.

Agricultural Engineering

Drainage.

Drainage.

Farm buildings.

Farm buildings, barns.

Irrigation.

Irrigation.

House plans.

House plans.

Machinery, farm and home.

Machinery, farm and home.

Photographs.

Photographs.

Roads.

Roads.

Sewage disposal.

Sewage disposal.

Silo construction.

Silo construction.

Terracing.

Terracing.

Technology.

Technology.
(Cross index home economics, waterproofing, cloth, care of leather, etc.)

Water systems.

Water systems.

Animal Husbandry

Beef cattle.

Animal husbandry.

Beef cattle.
Barns.
Breeding.
Disease.

(Subheadings)

(Main headings)

(Folder headings)

Animal Husbandry (continued)

Dairy Cattle.

Feeding.
Management.
Records (local).
Photographs.

Dairy cattle.
Barns.
Creameries & cream
 routes.
Dairying.
Diseases.
Equipment
Feeding.
Management.
Photographs.
Records (local).

Horses and mules.

Horses and mules.
Diseases.
Photographs.

Poultry.

Poultry.
Culling.
Diseases.
Feeding.
Housing.
Photographs.
Records (local).

Swine.

Swine.
Diseases.
Feeding.
Housing.
Photographs.
Records (local).

Sheep and goats.

Sheep and goats.
Records (local)

Apiculture

Apiculture.
Photographs.
Records (local).

Extension Methods

Analysis.

Analysis
County.
Community.

(Subheadings)

(Main headings)

(Folder headings)

Extension Methods (continued)

Campaigns.

Conferences.

Field meetings.

Office management.

Organization.

Surveys.

Tours.

Achievement days.

Campaigns.

Conferences.

State.

County.

Community.

Committee.

Field meetings.

Photographs.

Office management.

Organization.

Surveys.

Tours.

Photographs.

Field Crops

Cereals.

Cotton.

Forage crops.

Field crops.

Cereals.

Cultivation.

Diseases.

Insects.

Photographs.

Records (local)

Cotton.

Cultivation.

Diseases.

Insects.

Photographs.

Records (local)

Forage crops.

Cultivation.

Diseases.

Insects.

Photographs.

Records (local)

(Subheadings)

(Main headings)

(Folder headings)

Field Crops (continued)

Pastures.

Pastures.
Photographs.
Records (local).

Root crops.

Root crops.
Cultivation.
Diseases.
Insects.
Photographs.
Records (local).

Tobacco.

Tobacco.

Forestry

Forestry.
Photographs.
Records (local).

Farm Management

Farm management.
Records (local).

Horticulture

Horticulture.

Fruit culture.

Fruit culture.

Fruits (trees).

Fruits (trees).
Diseases.
Insects.
Photographs.
Records (local).

Fruits (small).

Fruits (small).
Diseases.
Insects.
Photographs.
Records (local).

Landscape gardening.

Landscape gardening.
Photographs.

Spraying and pruning.

Spraying and pruning.
Records (local).

(Subheadings)

(Main headings)

(Folder headings)

Horticulture (continued)

Vegetable gardening.

Vegetable gardening.
Diseases.
Hotbeds & coldframes.
Insects.
Photographs.
Records (local).

Home Economics

Clothing.

Home economics.
Clothing.

Food.

Food.
Canning.
Curing meat.

Home management.

Home management.
Accounts.
Equipment.

Health and sanitation.

Health and sanitation.
Home beautification.

House planning.

House planning.

Technology.

Technology.
Handicraft.
Basketry.
Sirup making.

Marketing

Crops.

Marketing.

Crops.

Livestock.

Livestock.

Purchasing.

Purchasing.

Publicity

Publicity.
Animals.
Crops.
Organization.
County press.
State press.

(Subheadings)

(Main headings)

(Folder headings)

Reports

Reports.
Yearly.
Monthly county agent,
Report forms.

Rodents and Predatory Animals

Rodents and predatory
animals.

Soils

Soils.

Cover crops.

Cover crops.

Fertilizers and lime.

Fertilizers and lime.

Soil erosion.

Soil erosion.

Statistics

Statistics.

Census.

Talk Material

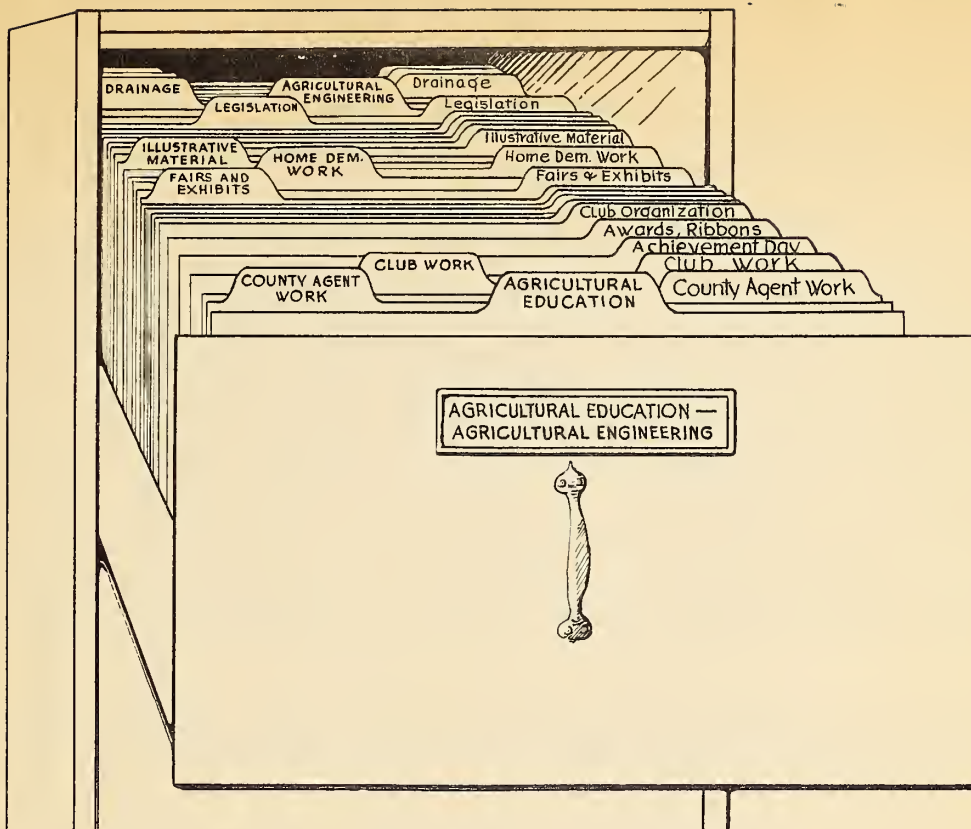
Talk material.

Weeds

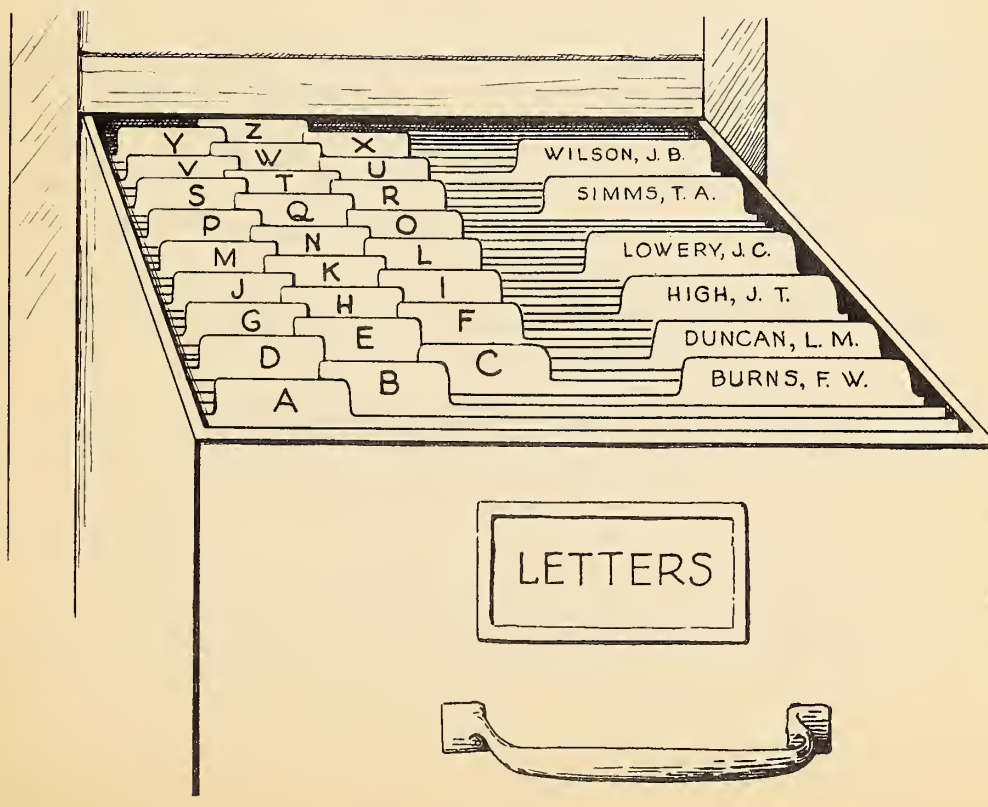
Weeds.

The successful operation of the file is largely dependent upon proper mechanical setting up. Approximately the following supplies will be needed for the information and report file. The report file will be discussed later. This material can be purchased from any firm carrying office supplies: A box of 100 fifth-cut file guides arranged in five positions may be used, or the following:

20 main-heading tab guide cards,	9 by 11 inches.
61 subheading guide cards with tabs in first and second position,	9 by 11 inches.
260 heavy-weight folders with tabs on right side,	9 by 11 inches.



First drawer of information file



Letter file located in the file cabinet

Old alphabetical file guides, arranged in five positions, may be used for subheading guides if the index space is covered with adhesive tape. Likewise old folders may be used in the same manner.

Guide tabs (the tab is the projecting part of the file card on which the heading appears) in five positions from left to right may be used for main headings and subheadings. For example, under the main heading "Agricultural Education," shown at position 3 in the diagram on page 9 comes the subheadings "County Agent Work," "Club Work," etc., shown at positions 1 and 2 on left. Only positions 1 and 2 should be used for subheadings. (Guides which may fall in fourth and fifth positions should be reversed in order to use in first and second positions as subheadings.) Thus the space at the right is left vacant for headings on folder tabs, which are subdivisions of the subheadings at the left. For example, in the diagram, page 9, under the subheading, "County Agent Work," comes the folder heading, "County Agent Work," shown in the space at the right. Likewise, under the subheading, "Club Work," would come the folder headings, "Club Work," "Awards, Ribbons," etc.

The following suggestions are primarily for those who have not had experience in setting up a file. Guide folders are approximately 9 by 11 inches.

First: Take out all main-heading tab card guides. Write or print titles, as "Agricultural Education," "Agricultural Engineering," etc., preferably in red ink following outline. Turn over and when finished place in file. Guides when finished will appear in alphabetical order.

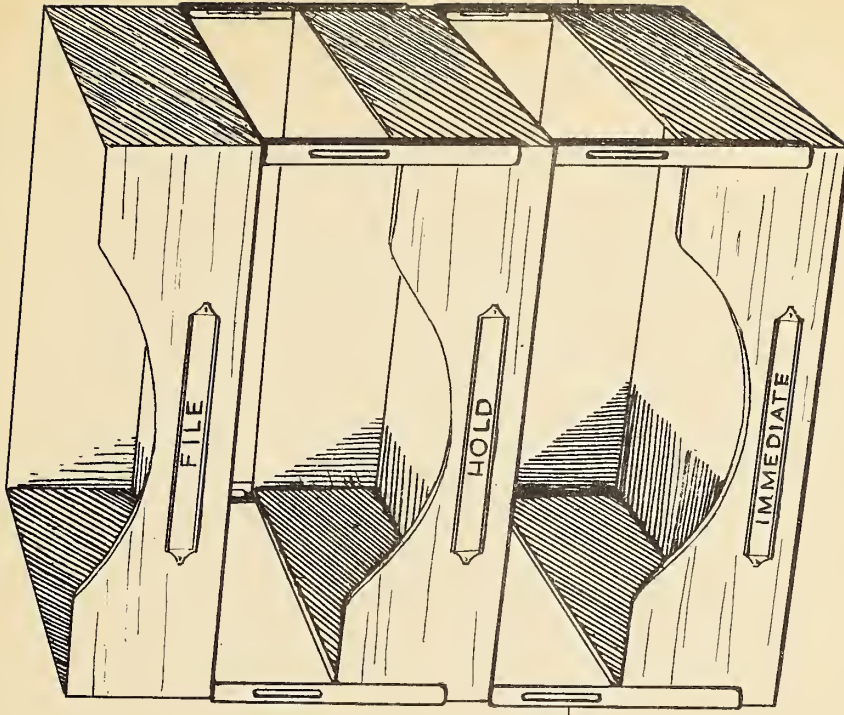
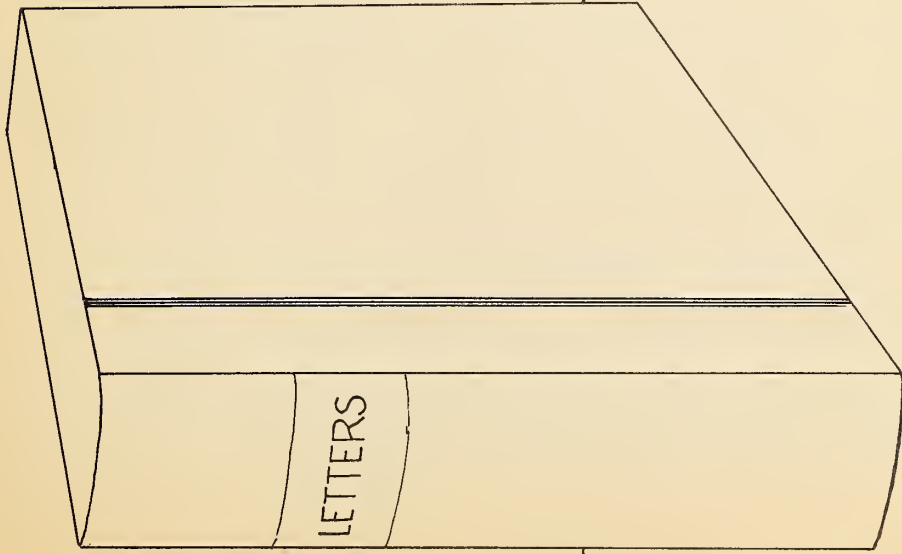
Second: Arrange all subheading tab guide cards in first and second positions on left side. Print or write titles on tabs in regular alphabetical order, viz, "County Agent Work," "Club Work," etc., under "Agricultural Education." Follow outline; turn over and when finished place in file back of main heading. With "Agricultural Engineering" proceed as before. It will be seen that you are developing the main skeleton of the file. When finished the guides may be fastened in place.

You may now print or write titles on folders, with tabs on right side. Turn over and when finished place folders in their proper order in the file drawer behind the respective guides.

Careful consideration has been given to the possible growth of the file. When a division becomes too large to handle with convenience, it may be divided by simply adding extra folders.

The Letter File

One drawer of the vertical file may be reserved for housing the alphabetical letter file, or the letter file may be placed in the desk drawer for convenience.



Letter-box file and wooden desk tray located on
top of desk for convenience

When this type of file is used, it is often found convenient to insert extra folders for those with whom you have frequent correspondence. (See illustration page 9.) Some agents who are not favored with stonographic help find the letter-box file shown on page 11 convenient for quick reference. It has the advantage of dodging the yearly transfer problem.

Putting Your Information and Letter File to Work

To function adequately, you must have complete confidence in the file. This is relatively easy if every incoming piece of mail is examined in view of its value for future reference. When found of informational value it should be placed in the "Hold" or "File" box or basket (located on desk) depending on whether you wish to review its content prior to filing. An illustration appears on page 14. This material may accumulate in the file box to be filed when a convenient season arrives. If you have a secretary who does your filing it will be advisable to write on the margin the heading under which to file. Nearly all letters should be housed in the letter file. However, it is often found difficult to remember the name of the correspondent while it is impossible to forget the subject. For example, the correspondent has for sale a certain product. Such letters of future informational value should be filed under the subject in the informational file. "One of the best places in the office to lose things so completely that you will never see them again is often in the correspondence file." All sheet material should be filed in the folders. Bulletins held for information should be filed by stamping them on end in two rows back of the folders. Never place bulletins in folders to the extent that folder tabs will be pulled down or that papers extend higher than folder tabs. An overloaded drawer causes decided loss of efficiency of file.

Cross indexing is seldom needed. In cases where the need arises, such as data on the cattle tick, it will naturally fall under the dairy animal in a dairy county, or beef in a beef county. In rare cases where both have equal standing place one under each head to facilitate efficiency of the file.

Letters requiring answering or notes of letters to write or duties to perform, should be placed in the "immediate" file box or basket. When the letter is answered and signed, it should be placed in the "immediate" box for mailing. The answer to letters should be pinned to original letters and placed in the "file" box for filing. All newspaper clipping of pertinent value should be mounted on manila paper of size corresponding to that of the folder. Each clipping should be marked so as to show the publication from which it was clipped, as well as the date it was published and the name of the author. Care should be taken to see that all mounted clippings on each sheet relate to the definite subject, to bring related material together. The subject, source, date, and author should be indorsed on outside. Clippings which are to be used for suggestions in writing similar articles should be filed under publicity. Those kept for subject matter should be placed under the subject. Those which are to be used to illustrate the narrative report should be filed under the subject in the narrative report file.

The county agent will find it a great convenience to keep photographic records under each enterprise in the information file.

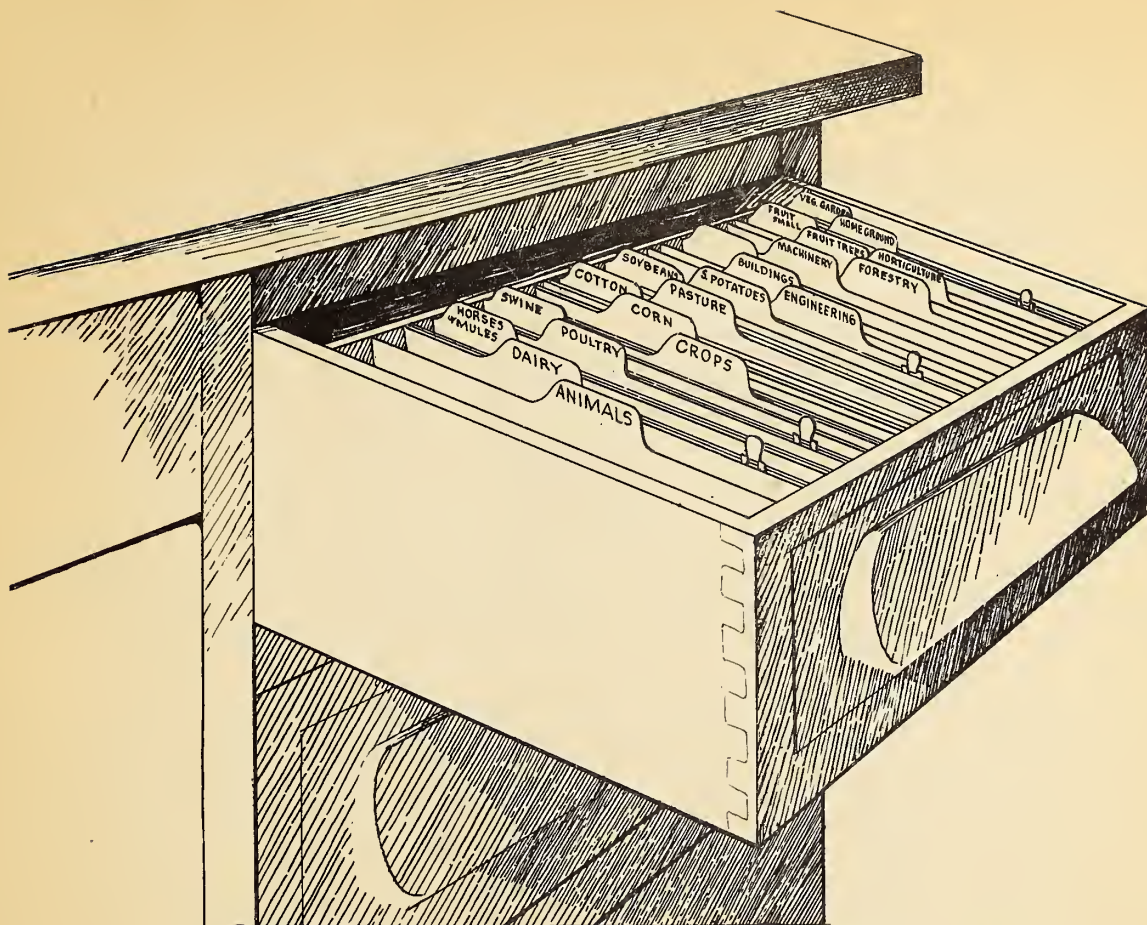
Catalogues should be filed under the main subject division or sub-head of that division. For example, a catalogue should be filed under "Horticulture" if it covers vegetables and flowers, or "Landscape Gardening" under "Horticulture" if it covers shrubs and flowers.

Narrative Report and Project File

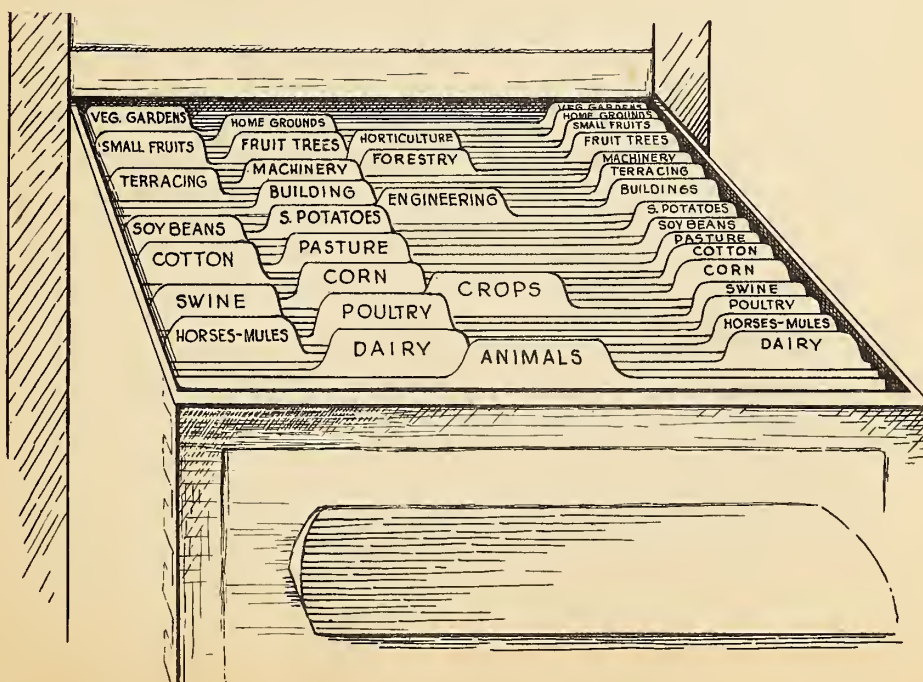
No agent can afford to be without a report file which automatically segregates report information in such manner as not to tax the memory of the busy agent. The county agent who has no demonstration records, and who depends on his memory or hasty review of his daily dairy and weekly or monthly reports to prepare a talk or to write a news article or an annual report, can not hope to find in available form the kind of material that will attract attention and serve as a permanent record of accomplishment in the county. Many reports written from memory or vest-pocket records are marked "nothing to index" in the Washington office.

For the sake of convenience the narrative report and project file is placed in the bottom drawer of the desk. The same mechanical set-up is used as in the case of the information file. It is set up in keeping with your plan of work, a folder being prepared for each project, sub-project, or enterprise. It is to house each enterprise plan of work as well as material to be used in annual reports. The folder under each heading will serve as a container for all material that is to be used in connection with writing the narrative report relating to the enterprise, such as extracts from monthly reports, suggestive notes dropped in throughout the year, pictures, news items, copies of circular letters, and report blanks. An illustration of this file is found on page 14.

In the front of this file or in the handbook the following record sheets should be kept to record the daily activities.



Demonstration record card file in top drawer of desk.
Small metal tabs separate adult and junior cards



Narrative report or project file in bottom drawer of desk

DAILY RECORD SHEET TO GO IN HANDBOOK OR NARRATIVE REPORT FILE

(It will be found convenient to measure time in field and office in tenths of a day.)

	Days in field	Days in office	Official calls	Letters written	Circular letters		News items supplied	Farm visits	Farmers visited 1st time this year	Demonstrations visited	Committee meetings		Method demonstrations		Demonstration field meetings		Other meetings		Supervisor visits	Specialist visits	No. of miles by automobile	No. of miles by rail	No. of miles by other means
					Written	Copies sent out					Number	Attendance	Number	Attendance	Number	Attendance	Number	Attendance					
1.																							
2.																							
3.																							
4.																							
5.																							
6.																							
7.																							
8.																							
9.																							
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26.																							
27.																							
28.																							
29.																							
30.																							
31.																							

By totaling these items each month and recording on the monthly sheet below it will be relatively easy to summarize the final results at the end of the year.

ANNUAL STATISTICS (By months)

193

	Total	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
Demonstrations established									
(Adult									
(Junior									
Days in field									
Days in office									
Official calls									
Letters written									
Circular letters -									
(Written									
(Copies sent out									
No. of news items supplied									
No. of farm visits									
Farmers visited first									
time this year									
Demonstrations visited -									
(Adult									
(Junior									
Committee meetings -									
(Number									
(Attendance									
Field meetings or tours									
to see demonstrations -									
(Number									
(Attendance									
Method demonstrations -									
(Number									
(Attendance									
Other meetings -									
(Number									
(Attendance									
Sets slides shown									
Supervisor visits									
Specialist visits									
No. of miles by auto									
No. of miles by rail									
No. of miles by other means									
No. of days on annual leave									
No. of days on sick leave									
No. of junior judging teams									

Name Holder

The county agent in a new county will find the name holder on the top of his desk will build a friendlier feeling by enabling visitors to call him by name.

'Phone

Efficiency as well as a business atmosphere is often created by having a pencil and directory hung near the 'phone, and a perforated writing pad handy. Where more than one use the 'phone an extension adds to the conveniences of the office.

Demonstrator's Record Returned on Franked Card

The mere filing of a report, whether indexed in the Washington office or not, is of least importance. Facts on demonstrations are necessary in order that the agent may have ammunition to use in contrasting improved practices demonstrated with low production practices in general use. News items, circular letters, and even field meetings and tours have lacked force because convincing local facts or proof were not available.

If quick-thinking business men welcome a system which aids them in directing their business and cutting operating costs, should not county agents do likewise? Is it not their duty as employees of the public to have such records of work planned and accomplished as will justify the past expenditures and lay the basis for increased financial support? Many county agents have not procured records on demonstrations because no adequate system of recording has been furnished. Practically every modern business firm, both large and small, has adopted the record slip made at time of transaction and the permanent record card system, thereby doing away with record books. The following system, which is similar to that used by most business firms will go far toward changing the disagreeable job of report making to a simple convenient procedure. The system consists of a vertical file suitable for housing the demonstrator record cards, and the plan of work and marketing, and other cards relating to special commodities or interests.

By using the double attached franked card much labor is saved in obtaining and filing records of demonstrators. The usual instructions for filling out the card appear on one side of one card and the demonstrator's name and address on the reverse side. The information wanted appears on one side of the other card to be detached and the return address of the agent on the reverse side. The card is folded and clipped before sending to the demonstrator. Cut on page 18 serves to illustrate the type of information to be found on return cards. Some agents prefer filling out these cards when making visits to demonstrators. These cards serve as a commodity or interest report for the year, by entering totals on the adapted card.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
U.S.Department of Agriculture and State Land-Grant Colleges Cooperating

Name	Address		R.F.D.
Kind of Crop	Variety	Acres	
Soil: Type	Date Plowed	Prep.	
Previous Crop: Last year	Year Before		
Plowed Under?	green? :dry? Moisture	Terraced	
	stubble?		
Spacing: Rows	Between Rows	Within Rows	Stand
Planting: Date	Method	: Total : Cost or	
Fertilizer: Formula	Date	%:Amount :Farm Value	
Times Cultivated	Manure	:	
Insects	Remedy	:	
Diseases	Remedy	:	
Labor: Man	hrs.	@	¢ Horse
Acre Yields: On Dem.	On same crop nearby	hrs.	@
Growing Period	Days	Total Yield	: Value
		Adult Dem. or	: Value
County	Junior Mem.	Age	: Cost

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
U.S.Department of Agriculture and State Land-Grant Colleges Cooperating

Name	Address		R.F.D.
Livestock Demonstration(Dairy,Hogs,Sheep,Poultry,etc.)			
Date begun	No. Animals	Value at Start	
Total weight or production at beginning (animals or milk, cream, eggs, etc.)			
Grain ration used	:	Total	:Cost or Farm
	:	Amount	: Value
Total grain fed	:	:	:\$
Kind of crop grazed	:	:	:\$
Kind of hay crop grown	:	:	:\$
*Receipts-total weight of animals, or pro-	Total Cost:	\$	
duction of milk,cream,eggs,wool, etc.	: Value	:\$	
	:Value above:		
Date concluded	: Cost	:\$	
Animals or products on hand	Sold	:	:\$
County	Junior Member or adult	Age	
*Represents gain in weight and value of production, demonstration, period			

Two samples of return penalty post cards used by
county extension agents to obtain demonstration data

How to File Record Cards

For the sake of convenience record cards may be kept in the top drawer of the desk. The guide cards used for classifying and separating them are set up according to the plan of work in the county, somewhat as illustrated on page 14.

Plan of Work Card

The card shown on page 20 is designed to furnish the agent with a suitable plan of work for each enterprise. Too few county agents make out a plan, and too many plans are not referred to after they are made and filed. Some seem to look on such a procedure as an overnight task inflicted by the supervisor once each year, and relegate a rather wordy plan to the desk drawer until next year. This card, so designed as to be usable throughout the year, is filed for convenient reference, and may be checked as the work is accomplished. The card is filled by checking in the proper space the work planned with the supervisor at the beginning of the year. The data on this card are extracted from the narrative plan of work previously referred to. The card is filed just back of each division represented in the plan of work. A list of demonstrators is placed on the reverse side and serves to check against the cards returned from the demonstrator.

Cooperative Marketing Card

Where cooperative marketing is done in connection with a commodity or interest, the marketing card illustrated on page 20 should be filled in after each cooperative sale and filed back of the blue plan-of-work card described in a previous paragraph.

The Bulletin Rack

The county agent must have at his finger tips the answers to most of the local problems in a form which can be handed to the farmer for study. Many good forms of bulletin racks are now in use. A county agent in Tennessee who originated a rack somewhat different from the usual type claims for it some advantages that are not usually found. The rack is only 1 inch in depth and has the advantage of not taking up great room space, the door or window facing often serving as one side of the rack. Only 10 bulletins are placed on the rack at a time. When the 10 are removed the label (indicating title and number of the bulletin) is removed and a mark is placed on the back of the label. By keeping tab in this manner, the agent is enabled to know just what lines of work are most popular. The label holders can be purchased at less than \$1 per dozen. Copper wires are used to hold the bulletins in place. Such arrangement gives a pleasing effect, and bulletins are visible for selection.

When many bulletins are kept, it has been found advantageous to number the positions across the top of the rack and letter the shelves. From this system a key may be developed to facilitate finding bulletins quickly.

[illegible][illegible]

Plan of work and cooperative marketing cards

Storing Stock Bulletins

The modern way of taking care of stock bulletins to replace those used on the rack is to keep in bins or shelves space numbered and lettered in keeping with the bulletin rack. (Key referred to above.) When the rack is replenished note is made when a supply of a certain bulletin is low and a new supply ordered.

The Bulletin Board

The bulletin board is a necessary part of the equipment of the agent who does not have stenographic help. Placing the agent's itinerary on the board facilitates locating him in cases of urgent need as well as keeping the inquiring mind satisfied. It also serves to post important notices, items of interest, pictures, clippings, or lists of articles for sale or purchase. Care should be taken that the bulletin board have an attractive appearance.

Duplicating Machines

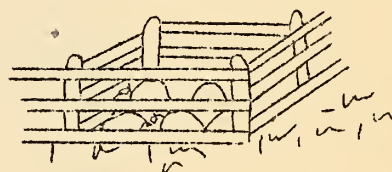
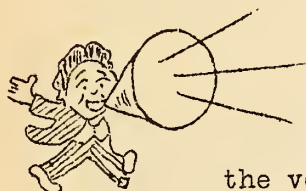
Business and educational institutions are putting duplicating machines to work as never before. Thousands of letters per hour may be easily and inexpensively reproduced. Circularizing has become a fine art in extension as well as in commercial work. The multigraph and mimeograph machines have become popular. These machines will turn out 1,000 per hour when operated by hand. The best of these machines are so constructed that the salutation can be filled in by the same typist. If a pen signature is desired, it is possible with a signature attachment to sign the name in writing fluid of any color at the same time letters are being multigraphed.

The county agent who has access to an addressing machine should have stencils or metal plates cut to carry his mailing lists. The hand-addressed envelope is obsolete in the business world and should be in the county agent's office. The typewritten envelope or card is often not economical where large numbers are to be mailed.

Many agents who do not have access to these machines locally are sending their letters or cards to the colloge. For years it has been the practice in some States for the specialists to prepare timely circular letters covering their work for the signature of the county agents of the State. Stencils are cut for the mailing lists and the letters or cards sent to the county agents in bulk for mailing locally. This practice usually receives the hearty indorsement of the agents, especially those who do not have access to equipment. It also enables the specialist to follow a systematic plan of work throughout the State. There is a growing tendency for the extension service to make use of the double franked card which has become so popular with business concerns. It eliminates letter folding and stuffing of envelopes. It also enables the county agent and specialist to get some measurement of how the work is being received through the return card. The practice of giving out return cards at field meetings, tours, and other gatherings is increasing.

This method provides an index of interest through the number of requests for literature and enables the agent to increase his mailing list. A well-timed follow-up return card often serves to show whether the farmer actually followed the recommended practice. Some county agents and specialists reproduce pictures of demonstrations, maps, drawings, charts, cartoons, diagrams, etc., as headings for circular letters.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
U. S. Department of Agriculture and State Land-Grant Colleges Cooperating



On _____, August _____, one of
the veterinarians will be out to vaccinate your hogs.
Be sure to have them in a small pen before he gets
there and sufficient help for holding them so that no
time will be lost.

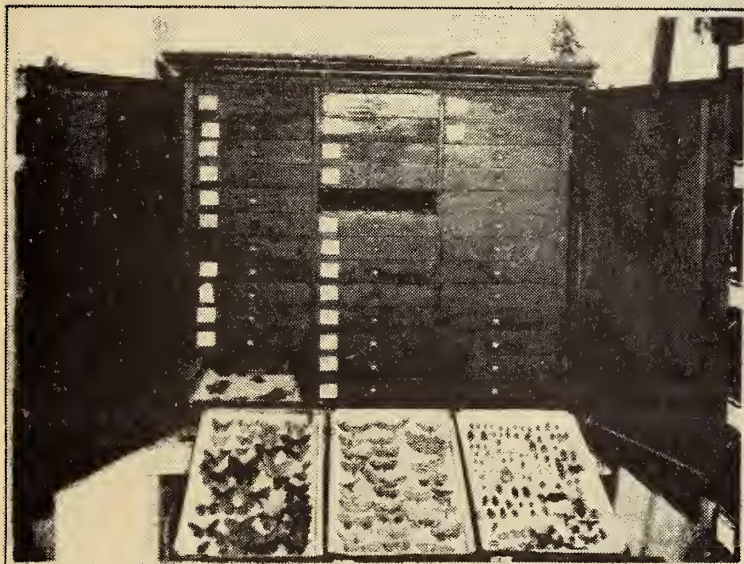
Very truly yours,

T. M. Evans,
County Agent.

One side of a double return penalty post card which illustrates the value of a picture in interesting the recipient in the county agent's message. The other half of the card contained a place for the farmer to indicate the number of hogs vaccinated, and after being filled out was detached and returned to the county agent.

The Educational Exhibit

The present-day trend toward the use of educational exhibits is gradually finding its way into the county agent's office. The display of properly mounted materials concerning economic production not only serves to assist the agent in clearing up a farm problem in the mind of a farmer who visits the office but enables the wide-awake secretary to give the farmer the desired information to solve his problems in the absence of the agent. If each specimen is accompanied by a formula treatment, or if attention is called to available bulletins the secretary is enabled to complete the transaction in the absence of the agent. By leaving a card or note in the "immediate" box the agent's attention is called to the transaction, and he can phone or write if he thinks necessary. (Pictures of exhibits used by County Agent H. B. Derr of Virginia will be found on page 23.)



Office exhibits of County Agent H. B. Derr, of
Fairfax County, Va.

Another simple type of exhibit that may be placed in the window of the office, if it is located on the first floor, is an enterprize exhibit. Such an exhibit usually depicts a local farm problem and its solution, and the progress made in the county in solving the problem.

The Need of an Efficient Secretary

With the new and increasing demands made upon county agents, certainly none are more insistent than that he be provided with an efficient secretary. She has become an increasingly important factor in the carrying out of an extension program.

The county agent has always been essentially a field man and always must be; however, the time has arrived when the county agent's office has become a clearing house for all kinds of agricultural information. He is receiving many more letters and phone calls and office visits. If letters are not attended to promptly and phone calls are not answered because of the absence of the agent from the office, it not only reflects discredit on the agent but on the county as well.

It certainly is false economy to expect a \$3,000 to \$5,000 man to get out his own letters by the two-finger "hunt and pick system." This is especially true when two extension agents have offices in the same county. The relieving of his brain of this detail, leaving it free for constructive work, for which he is hired, has proved worth while from the standpoint of economy and efficiency.

Local financing bodies realize the folly of such procedure and are rapidly providing adequate office equipment and clerical help. Of course it behooves county agents who have become accustomed to doing without such help to think through the services his office should render and adjust his office and plans to meet the demands of the day.

The Use of the Secretary

The county agent must spend the necessary time to explain the nature of the work. The new employee is too frequently thrown on her own resources, and errors creep in before the new cog fits into the extension machine. She should be made to see that she is a very important cog, and much depends on her efficiency. Looking after the affairs of others with more or less of an executive nature, not only has an appeal but affords opportunity for advancement provided, of course, the secretary has proved herself fitted for something greater. The function of the secretary suggests much more than performing the mechanical part of letter-writing. She should know what is to be done and do it without being told. She should not only think with but even ahead of the agent as to what should be done so far as the office is concerned, and should be in a position to make other suggestions relating to the work which will be well received if it is done in the proper spirit of cooperation.

Since dictation will be one of the first duties the secretary will have to perform, a few suggestions on this should be in order. Since the county agent usually has some time in the office before his secretary arrives, he should review each letter to be written and think through what he has to say and have before him all necessary material to answer each letter before beginning to dictate. It is also found helpful to announce the title of each letter when starting to dictate; this aids the secretary to know in advance the subject for discussion. This title or subject about which a letter is written should appear in the letter just preceding the body of the letter after the salutation. This expedites locating a letter in the file as well as gives the recipient, at a glance, an idea as to what is to follow.

"The potent factor in a business letter today is the opening paragraph -- the first sentence. The object is to compel immediate favorable attention." Letters should be dictated as if the writer were talking to the recipient in person, using conversational style. The discussion of the subject at hand should be from the point of view of the reader, eliminating the I, we, and all superfluity. The last sentence offers an opportunity to clinch your idea. This productive part of the letter should not be wasted by writing, "lifeless, time-worn and insipid endings!"

Duties of Secretary

Since it is the duty of secretaries to county agents to write all letters that go out from his office, it is therefore necessary that she be a good stenographer and typist. It is her duty to save the time of the agent in all matters to which she can attend.

She is the "business hostess" who greets all callers courteously, and determines whether she can supply the desired information, recording the call, or refer to the agent for his attention. She makes out reports by taking extracts from the agent's diary. The agent can save his and her time by making notes complete enough to understand and by cutting off the corner of the diary book which facilitates turning to the exact date immediately. She may compile data and write up a section of the annual report as soon as the work is finished. By so doing she may not only save the agent's time but facilitate getting this important document off on time. Too often this matter is put off until the last moment. She may edit a local extension news, having correspondents in each community. She should study and write news items from notes supplied by the agent. She should study the art of writing good circular letters and get them out at the proper time to be most effective.

She should keep up with the filing and clip news items, placing copies of them and of circular letters in the report and publicity file. When it is thought advisable she may keep a local scrapbook.

It is most important to maintain a systematic and complete record of bulletins and circulars used and needed in connection with the work. An adequate stock record of such material as well as forms, stationery, and other supplies, should be kept. The secretary may review

bulletin lists and call the agent's attention to those of possible value for the information file. She may also review the list of cards handed in at field and other meetings, sending out requested information and adding to the mailing list.

Many agents who have aspired to placing their system of office management on a plane comparable with that of other lines of business have voiced their approval of a system which has thrown light into the shadows of the old order of office disorder.

